

# Dual Customer Services

Prepared by the

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# **Training and Development Mission**

We are here to help TWC and our partners enhance employee workplace skills and productivity through the development, coordination, and delivery of quality learning opportunities.

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# Dual Customer Services

## Performance Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1. Explain the Dual Customer Approach and why it is important.
2. Describe the role of the National Employment Team (NET) and its significance on VR outcomes.
3. Coordinate with the Business Relations Team (BRT) to serve our customers.
4. Apply strategies that develop business partners and engage employers.
5. Identify local labor market opportunities.
6. Designate VR services that support the needs of business partners.

## Module 1: Dual Customer Services

The goal of vocational rehabilitation is employment. It is the responsibility of the vocational rehabilitation counselor to provide and coordinate services to remove barriers to employment.

### Two Customers, One Outcome

Traditionally, the focus of obtaining the goal of employment has been centered on the individual needs of job seekers with disabilities. This is just one part of the dual customer approach.

Over the past several years, research has shown the value of including the needs of the business community as a shared focus in vocational rehabilitation. By incorporating the needs of our business partners, VR increases employment outcomes. From this perspective, vocational rehabilitation includes both the needs of the VR customer and the needs of local businesses, which is called “the dual customer approach.”

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires making improvements to VR programs that address both the needs of businesses and that of job seekers with a disability in order to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes.

WIOA defines competitive integrated employment as:

- employment where the individual with a disability is earning the same wage as those performing the same duties without a disability,
- a community setting in which the individual with a disability performs job tasks alongside employees with and without a disabilities, and
- a setting where the individual with a disability is eligible for the same opportunities for advancement as are available for individuals without disabilities.

Thus, according to the Business Roundtable Report Employer Engagement in Vocational Rehabilitation (Department of Education, December 12, 2016), the two core purposes of WIOA include:

1. ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive the support they need to acquire the skills necessary to obtain, maintain, and advance in competitive integrated employment; and
2. ensuring that employers receive the necessary training and technical assistance needed to better understand and receive the talent potential individuals with disabilities can bring to the workforce.

This training will provide you with the resources that you need to provide best practice services to both the VR and business customers.

## Employer Attitudes

Employers with limited “disability-awareness” have the following concerns:

- lower productivity,
- higher absenteeism,
- a lack of necessary skills,
- require greater supervision compared to individuals without disabilities, and
- additional safety concerns.

### Activity 1: Myth Busters

Opinions of individuals with disabilities often come from misinformation about disabilities. In this game, we will learn some of the myths and facts about individuals with disabilities.

In small groups, randomly choose a myth buster. As a group, you will discuss the myth buster you have chosen and report whether it is a myth or a fact.



## **Module 2: The National Employment Team (NET) and the Business Relations Team (BRT)**

### **The National Employment Team**

On a national level, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) created the NET to ensure businesses have access to the VR talent pool across the country. The make-up of the NET includes the national network of 80 public vocational rehabilitation programs that work to provide a united approach to working with business customers.

The NET state point of contact within every VR agency coordinates business engagement activities with national and regional businesses. The NET point of contact connects businesses with a local VR contact so that VR can better understand employer needs as they relate to a diverse workforce. More information about the NET can be found at:

<https://www.csavr.org/the-net>

### **The Business Relations Team**

The Business Relations Team (BRT) was created in order to provide better service to Texas businesses and to assist with the employment efforts of individuals with disabilities.

The BRT works with both the Texas Workforce Solutions Centers and the NET to coordinate services to businesses at the local and national level.

The team consists of Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) designated state office staff. These staff include Program Specialists, Regional Business Relations Coordinators, Employment Assistance Specialists and Outreach Service and Coordination (OSC) Teams. The Business Relations Team develops business relationships to serve business customers with the expected outcome of increasing successful employment opportunities. You can learn more about these specialists and positions by reading the VRSM or by getting to know these staff in your specific regional offices.

### **Role of the TWC VR Designated State Office Program Specialist**

TWC VRS state office program specialists coordinate activities of the VR Business Relations Team such as:

- serving as points of contact for TWC leadership, VR Business Relations Team members, and employers seeking information about VRS services through the VR Business Relations website;
- providing information, training, and technical assistance to support full implementation of functions as outlined throughout this chapter;
- planning and facilitating quarterly VR Business Relations Team meetings and training sessions;
- researching and identifying opportunities to improve services to businesses; and

- representing VR on the National Employment Team of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

### **Role of the TWC VRS Business Relations Coordinator**

TWC VRS Business Relations Coordinators (BRCs) operate under regional management direction to build on regional business partnerships that will increase customer employment opportunities.

BRCs connect with the local business community to share information about VR services and to gain an understanding of labor market trends. BRCs will work with management to develop the OSC Teams in local areas across Texas to support Business Services, as well as to provide/coordinate the following services to the business community and TWC VRS staff.

- Outreach and disability awareness that can include:
  - networking and marketing activities;
  - conducting business contact meetings and disability awareness presentations;
  - presenting and interacting with businesses at symposium and expositions;
  - coordinating, facilitating, and participating in job, career, and hiring fairs; and
  - collaborating with other agency stakeholders.

- Consultation, resource information, and support that can include:
  - disability awareness and/or sensitivity training;
  - worksite assessments, job analysis, and accommodations recommendations;
  - technical assistance and procedure development;
  - assistive technology assessments and training;
  - compliance issues, affirmative action, and/or diversity strategy planning; and
  - individualized business support planning and development of strategies regarding a business operational plan.
  
- Job placement and retention assistance that can include:
  - job posting clarification;
  - candidate screening activities;
  - candidate training programs;
  - job order matching and/or referral;
  - new hire facilitation and follow-up; and
  - job retention activities.

## **Role of the Regional Outreach Services and Coordination Teams**

The regional Outreach Services and Coordination (OSC) teams are the primary points of contact in developing business partnerships on the local and regional levels. OSC teams are established at regional levels by the BRCs. These teams can include managers, Employment Assistance Specialists, counselors, teachers, and support staff and other VR staff members that work directly with businesses in their communities to enhance employment opportunities for customers. OSC teams identify, implement, and monitor the progress of business outreach activities across VRS regions, and disseminate this information to the BRCs to develop a comprehensive statewide network for business relations.

Regional OSC teams also work in partnership with businesses to:

- establish local resources that will assist in developing a referral base as well as provide support services to sustain customers after they are employed;
- work with management to conduct outreach events;
- promote and coordinate VR Business Service deliverables to businesses;
- identify businesses to target jobs in the area served; and
- record activities in the Business Tracking Tool.(DY)

The Business Relations Team (BRT) collaborates with the Workforce Solutions Centers by:

- partnering together for hiring events and posting job openings at the center and/or WorkInTexas.com;
- assisting in talking to employers regarding employing and managing individuals with disabilities, accommodations, and issues regarding the ADA;
- working with community partners (CRPs) and staff to develop lasting business partnerships that result in multiple employment opportunities;
- providing job placement assistance to find a job for a consumer at a specific point in time; and
- focusing on employers who are federal contractors and subcontractors.

The BRT is a one-company approach or a point of contact providing “value-added” VR services to businesses such as:

- no-cost pre-employment services that include internships, mentoring opportunities, and on-the-job training;
- recruitment and referral of qualified candidates;
- staff training on disability awareness, the ADA, other employment laws, and assistive technology in the workplace;

- diversity program strategies that support the inclusion of people with disabilities as employees;
- retention programs to support employees who develop or acquire a disability; and
- technical assistance and support such as:
  - workplace accommodations, including assistive technology;
  - information technology and the accessibility of internal or external sites, computer hardware, and software;
  - information regarding accessibility; and
  - information regarding financial incentives such as tax credits/or deductions available for hiring or accommodating people with disabilities.

The objectives of the BRT are to:

1. Maintain business relationships that will improve the quality of employment outcomes for all VR customers.
2. Ensure collaboration among VR offices when working with business partners and understand the local Labor Market needs.
3. Collaborate with Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs in regards to developing

strategies to meet federal compliance regulations for hiring individuals with disabilities.

There are three main service deliverables provided by the BRT:

1. outreach and disability awareness;
2. consultation, resource information, and support and training;  
and
3. job placement and retention assistance.

Each service is followed through the Business Tracking Tool. The Business Tracking Tool is designed to assist with coordination of business outreach efforts, and to track the progress and relationship with each business.

There are Business Service Units at the local workforce development centers that work with local businesses and program staff on behalf of job seekers. The local Business Service Units and the VR Business Relations Team both have working relationships with local businesses. Because both of these units work with our local business partners, it is essential that staff coordinate with both of these units to provide seamless service delivery to customers. In doing so, staff will maximize available resources and enhance relationships with local business partners while minimizing duplication of efforts.



## **Group Activity 2: Role of the Business Relations Team**

Directions: In your assigned groups, read the section on the BRT. Discuss the objectives of the BRT, the services they provide, and what their role is in vocational rehabilitation. Using the VR manual to cite your references, answer the following questions.

1. What is the difference between the NET and the BRT?
2. What has your experience been in working with the BRT?
3. What is the process for working with your regional BRT?
4. What are the main services provided by the BRT?
5. How might you utilize the services provided by the BRT?

## Module 3: Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation

### Unemployment Rates



Recent data indicates the unemployment rate for individuals with a disability is twice the unemployment rate of individuals without a disability. Out of the nearly 30 million individuals with a disability ages 16 and older, only 19.5 percent are working, compared to 68.5 percent of the population of individuals without a disability. And, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, individuals with a disability were less likely to be employed than those without a disability across all education levels (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

We can lower the unemployment rate for job seekers with disabilities by:

1. maintaining knowledge of the local businesses within the community,
2. matching the customer's job goal to jobs that are available in the local job market,
3. listening to local business needs and goals,

4. providing education regarding vocational rehabilitation services that meet needs of both VR customers and local business, and
5. utilizing the services of the NET and the BRT.

### **Small Group Activity 3: Cultivating Informed Choices**

In your groups, answer the following questions.

1. What strategies do you use to promote informed choice regarding job goals?
2. How do you guide the customer to gather information and make decisions about employment opportunities in the local job market?
3. How do you determine if the customer has a vocational goal that meets the demand in their local job market?
4. How can you keep current on what local employers are looking for in a good candidate when hiring for an available job opportunity?

5. Where do you find information about local employers and how do you go about researching a business?

## Self-Advocacy

Another important piece to a successful employment outcome is self-advocacy. Self-advocacy is an important skill to promote during the VR process. Self-advocacy is the ability to make informed decisions about the supports that are needed and the ability to clearly communicate that information to others. Ask about the level of confidence the job seeker with a disability has in talking to a potential employer about their disability and ability to do the job well.

Research indicates people who are involved with and make choices about their vocational goals achieve more positive employment outcomes. Successful employment outcomes happen when customers assess their needs, determine goals, and make an action plan to obtain those goals.

### **Keys to Self-Advocacy**

The Confidence Builder philosophy which has been a part of blindness rehabilitation since 2001 incorporates the “Big 6” skill areas otherwise known as the core skills of blindness.

Adjustment is one of these areas in which self-advocacy plays a role. By the time someone can advocate for their needs, it is clear they have a sense of self awareness and know what is needed to function. Help promote self –advocacy by

incorporating these following areas when working with customers:

1. Know yourself.

- Knowledge is the key to self-advocacy. Like anything else, the more you know and understand your needs, the easier it is to explain to someone else.
- Adjust to your disability by having knowledge of your condition and its impact.

2. Know what you need.

- What types of modification or an adjustment to a job or the work environment have you previously utilized or need to explore?
- If this is a different job, what are the job tasks? What are possible environmental considerations at the job site?
- First job? How much information do you know about your job tasks and work environment?

3. Know how to get what you need.

- As a VR agency, we need to explore and discuss accommodations and coordinate resources that provide what customers need to achieve employment. Discuss what types of accommodations may be needed for a

particular job. This will require not only knowledge of the job but of the employer as well.

Remember empowered people have a greater chance of meeting their goals, it is important to help customers build Confidence. As VR professionals we need to find ways to communicate the following to our customers:

- Believe in yourself.
- Take chances.
- Be Empowered.
- Live to the Fullest.

So assist customers in mastering areas like the “Big 6” which promote adjustment to blindness (including other disabling conditions), Independent Living, Travel, Communication, Support Systems and Vocational skills.

#### **Activity 4: Best Buy Video**

The following video illustrates a positive employment outcome as the result of informed choice in the VR process and self-advocacy.

A useful resource to learn about self-advocacy is the ARC website: [www.selfadvocacyonline.org](http://www.selfadvocacyonline.org).

## Module 4: Employer-Focused VR Services

### Types of VR Services

Some of the benefits VR offers local business partners are:

- qualified pre-screened applicants that save time and recruitment costs,
- opportunities to increase a diverse workforce,
- on-the-job training support,
- consultation on disability related issues,
- no-cost job accommodation support and solutions,
- leading-edge technology evaluation and supports,
- valuable information about tax credits and incentives,
- information and referral, and
- in-service staff training and education.

## Leading Edge Technology Support: Accessibility

You can help employers understand that accessible design is good design for everyone. Here is a list of tips that will get you started in bridging the gap between inaccessible and accessible places of employment. Accessibility is one of the largest barriers for job seekers. Below are two examples of reference guides employers will find helpful to create an accessible work environment, you can also find more information on the Office of the Texas Governor's website: <http://gov.texas.gov/disabilities/accessibledocs>.

### Microsoft Word Tips

- Use the Word styles menu options.
- Add a linked table of contents to large documents.
- Place images in-line with text.
- Add alternative text to images.
- Do not allow table rows to break across pages.
- Do not use text boxes.
- Do not create columns using tables.



## **Email Tips**

- Use HTML format.
- Do not embed attachments in plain text or rich text email.
- Avoid stationery.

## **Microsoft Excel Tips**

- Keep table design simple.
- Align tables on the left edge of the worksheet.
- Separate tables with a blank row.
- Do not use blank rows or columns for formatting.
- Provide meaningful titles for the worksheets.
- Place charts and graphs in a separate tab.
- Use Microsoft PowerPoint Tips.
- Use the standard layouts.
- Choose a design with good contrast.
- Avoid tables.

## **Training Support: Diversity presentations and Disability Awareness**

Provide consultation to local business partners through staff training that increases awareness of the abilities of job seekers with a disability. Share information and supportive guidance that bridges the gap between misconceptions about job seekers with disabilities and positive attitudes about hiring job seekers with disabilities. Consider the following outline when planning a training event.

### **Diversity Presentations**

A diversity presentation provides information about people with disabilities through emphasizing their abilities. The presentation can be a one-on-one conversation, or large group discussion. There are many benefits as a result of providing effective awareness presentations. These include:

- increased understanding through minimizing misconceptions;
- development of referral sources;
- marketing agency programs and services, especially to employers; and
- open doors for job seekers with disabilities.

VR professionals can provide a diversity presentation as long as they are able to competently and confidently talk about this topic. Keep in mind that when including customers who are minors, policy requires the completion of proper release forms.

## **Tips**

### 1. Gear the presentation to your audience.

- Be aware of who YOU represent.
- Know the business you are working with.
- Know your audience and consider the audience size.
- Give at least 30 minutes for the presentation.
- Assess the knowledge level of the audience.
- Remember Adult Learning needs.

### 2. Use icebreakers.

- Make uncomfortable topics comfortable.
- Engage audience with interactive, personal & interesting activities.
- Share success stories.
- Use activities related to the topic.

### 3. Create a presentation style.

- Use your agency/team resources.

- Incorporate props and relevant hands-on devices.
- Bring brochures and business cards.
- Engage a team presentation that will assist in making a positive impression, especially if the team presentation includes a person with a disability.
- Exhibit enthusiasm.

4. Present effective videos.

- Stay current.
- Make sure the video has a positive message.
- Ensure all materials used are consistent with agency mission.
- Research materials in advance for quality.
- Build your own resource library and share resources with others.
- Coordinate time for the video and follow-up discussion within the schedule.

5. Demonstrate technology.

- Help the audience think outside the box by starting off with low or no tech alternative techniques for accomplishing tasks.
- Keep it simple and introduce what's achievable and possible.
- Be prepared with resource information such as where to see assistive technology or facilitate a tour of these centers.

6. Incorporate experiential activities.

- Teach alternative techniques, which can be effective if conducted with success in mind. Examples may include performing simple tasks under blindfold, writing exercises with a non-dominant hand to illustrate learning challenges, or using independent living aids to achieve daily living tasks.
- Identify the purpose of the activity.
- Build success into the activity.
- Be creative and include a variety of experiences that illustrate how tasks can be achieved without using traditional methods. For example, show how someone

who is blind might use a computer with speech instead of sight to read the screen.

- Make it fun.
- Make time to process the experience and have significant discussion.

7. Provide question-and-answer time.

- Allow plenty of time for questions and answers.
- Create an open atmosphere allowing people to feel comfortable asking any question.
- Be prepared with some questions that are important and may not get asked.
- If using a team presentation approach, the lead can route questions to a member most likely to have the best answer.
- If you don't know an answer, it's ok to research and follow up.

8. Make a graceful exit.

- Prepare and present a concluding summary.
- Help the audience identify what they learned from the presentation.
- Share program and contact information. (Diversity presentations often result in referrals.)

9. Follow up.

- Phone the individual or organization that invited you to gain feedback.
- Find out what worked well, where things can improve, and if expectations were met by sending a follow-up business satisfaction survey.
- Inquire if there are other needs.
- Send a thank you letter.

## **Consultation Support: Accommodations**

### **Steps to Collaborative Solutions**

All employers want their employees to use the correct tools on the job to boost productivity. For some employees, employers may find that workplace accommodations are necessary to maximize efficiency.

A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way things are usually done that enables an individual with a disability to participate in the application process, to perform the essential functions (or fundamental duties) of a job, or to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment that are available to individuals without disabilities. Accommodations help employers not only hire new workers with disabilities, but also keep workers who may become disabled.

The process for making such accommodations is no different in principle than implementing workplace procedures designed to build productive work environments. As with all such procedures, open lines of communication and clearly defined steps help to facilitate the process and achieve positive outcomes for both employers and employees.



## Steps to Successful Accommodations

1. Notify employees. Employers covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are required to post notices describing the employment provisions of the ADA. It is advisable for employers to have a process in place for facilitating accommodation requests and to take steps to ensure that all employees are aware of and understand it.
2. Facilitate requests. If an individual with a disability seeks an accommodation, generally he or she is responsible for informing the employer of the need. Individuals do not have to use the word “accommodation,” but they must indicate that they have difficulty carrying out their tasks due to a disability.
3. Analyze jobs. To facilitate the accommodation process, it is prudent for employers to develop and maintain a detailed description for each job that lists its essential functions and duties. Such descriptions should focus on a job, not a person. For example, a warehouse position may require that boxes be stacked on shelves. The essential function of this job is that boxes be stacked, not that a person lift boxes.
4. Take into consideration all aspects of a job when developing job descriptions. In addition to specific tasks, descriptions should include details such as scheduling and location, equipment necessary to complete the job, any health and safety requirements, and conduct requirements. Consider the following example:

- Specific tasks for a receptionist's job may include answering and accurately directing phone calls, greeting and checking in visitors, and transcribing and filing documents. The receptionist must use a phone and computer. He or she must be available in the office lobby during regular office hours and be pleasant to callers and visitors.
  - If these are essential functions of the job, they should be included in the job description and accommodation process.
5. Identify functional limitations. When a reasonable accommodation is needed to perform essential job functions, the employer and employee should discuss the employee's functional limitations and determine where they intersect with his or her duties. Again, the focus should be on a person's essential job tasks and the physical functions necessary to complete them, not his or her disability. Typically, such functions can be described in "I-N-G" action verbs such as "walking," "pushing," and "reading." Again, using the receptionist's job as an example, consider the following:
- Perhaps the person hired for the position uses a wheelchair and cannot roll his or her wheelchair under the reception desk in the office lobby. Perhaps he or she has dyslexia and cannot accurately write down phone numbers in messages. Perhaps he or she has severe repetition motion syndrome and has difficulty typing.

- It is important to identify the type of accommodations that might be available to allow this otherwise qualified individual to perform the specific tasks.
6. Determine potential accommodations. Sometimes, an employee with a disability is aware of the modifications he or she needs to perform certain tasks. Other times, devising an effective accommodation requires creative and collaborative thinking. It is important to remember that accommodations are not limited to adjustments to a physical work environment. They may involve changes to the way a job is done or structured, modified workplace policies and procedures, adjusted work schedules, swapping or eliminating marginal functions or perhaps even changes to corporate culture. Or, they may entail procuring assistive technology or services such as readers or interpreters.
- If the receptionist uses a wheelchair, potential accommodations may include elevating the desk on blocks, or installing an adjustable height counter (which would also accommodate anyone else filling in), or remodeling to replace the desk with one that could be used with a wheelchair.
  - For the worker with dyslexia, potential accommodations may include installing a voicemail system, creating a color-coded phone directory and accompanying switchboard, or exchanging the job's phone-answering duties for another employee's tasks.

- If the person has repetitive motion syndrome, potential accommodations may include providing an ergonomically designed keyboard, installing voice recognition software on a computer, or reassigning duties, or allowing a job share with another employee.
7. Determine reasonable solutions. The ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified applicants or employees with disabilities unless doing so would cause undue hardship. Undue hardship refers not only to financial difficulty, but also to accommodations that are unduly extensive or disruptive, or that would fundamentally alter the nature or operation of the business.
- Determination of undue hardship takes into account the nature and cost of the accommodation, the business's overall financial resources, the number of persons it employs and the accommodation's impact on the business and its expenses and resources. When cost is a concern, an employer should explore whether funding is available from an outside source, such as a state rehabilitation agency.
  - Fellow employees' or customers' fears or prejudices do not constitute undue hardship.
8. Make the accommodation. An employer has the final say on which accommodation is implemented based on factors such as cost, effectiveness, and business feasibility. However, accommodations work best when both the employer and

employee participate in the process, and the employee's needs and preferences have been taken into consideration in making the decision.

9. Monitor effectiveness. Not all accommodations produce the desired outcome. If the accommodation is not working, the employer and employee should start the process again.
  - Like most sound management practices, the accommodation process is enhanced by collaboration. Moreover, by requiring employers and employees to work together and think creatively about how various tasks are accomplished, it may help to uncover strategies that lead to a more positive and productive workplace for all employees.

## **Help Available**

There are resources to assist employers and employees during all stages of the accommodation process.

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a free, confidential service from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy that provides individualized accommodation solutions. You can contact JAN by phone at 1-800-1526-7234 (Voice), by TTY at 1-877-781-9403, or via the JAN website (<https://askjan.org>).

The ADA Technical Assistance Manual on the employment provisions (Title I) of the ADA is available from the Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission (EEOC) by calling 1-800-669-3362 (V) or 1-800-800-3302 (TTY).

Ten regional Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research provide ADA information, training, and technical assistance across the nation. They can be contacted at 1-800-949-4232 (V/TTY).

## **Tax Benefits**

Three tax incentives are available to help businesses offset the costs of accommodations and improve employment opportunities for employees with disabilities.

The Small Business Tax Credit (IRS Code Section 44, Disabled Access Credit) can be used by certain small businesses for architectural changes, equipment, or services such as sign language interpreters.

The Architectural/Transportation Tax Deduction (IRS Code Section 190, Barrier Removal) can be used by businesses of any size to make architectural and transportation modifications.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) benefits certain employers who hire certain targeted low-income groups, including Social Security Insurance recipients or certified vocational rehabilitation referrals.

For more information about these tax incentives, visit the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy's publications page: [www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/misc/job.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/misc/job.htm).

See additional accommodation links in the References section at the end of this document.

## **Job Analysis**

A job analysis is a systematic process to determine the important work behaviors performed on a specific job and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the work.

When is a job analysis helpful?

- After identification of a possible job opportunity following a site tour.
- To better understand job retention needs.

A job analysis helps to:

- Establish employee selection and promotion procedures.
- Develop employee training methods.
- Develop employee performance appraisal systems.
- Design or restructure a job.
- Classify a job.
- Assist with recruiting or staffing.

- Identify essential job tasks.

## Steps

1. Gather information.
2. Conduct interviews.
3. Observe the job with continuous questioning to gain insight.
4. Conduct an essential function review.
5. Summarize findings in a report (use the agency's Business Development and Job Analysis Worksheet).

When reviewing essential functions keep in mind:

- An essential duty is any task which is basic, necessary and integral to a job. For example, the reason the position exists is to perform the function, or the function may be highly specialized and related to the employee's expertise.
- Determine if the duties are required to be performed on a regular basis. If the duties are rarely performed, they may not be essential.
- Is the duty highly specialized? The need for special expertise is an indication the task is essential.



Remember, a job analysis describes the job — not the person that does it.

### **Activity 5: Individualized Employer Plans**

Directions: Read the following scenarios and determine what VR services you would offer these employers.

1. An employer has a staff person in the office who is losing some hearing due to aging.
  
2. An employer has several openings and is having difficulty finding qualified applicants.
  
3. An employer has no idea what people with disabilities can do on the job, but has a mandate from the federal government to hire more people with disabilities (since currently there are no employees with disabilities).

4. An employer wants to hire youth with disabilities and doesn't know where to start.
  
5. An employer has staff with and without disabilities and notices that the department is not working together.
  
6. An employer just hired a person for a clerical position and learned after he or she started with the company that they are visually impaired.
  
7. An employer has a staff person with a disability that needs assistance on the job and has no idea what accommodations to request or what is available to them.

## Module 5: Business Engagement

### Eight-Step Process for Developing New VR Business Partners

VR counselors make employer contacts to cultivate relationships with the local business community. The following are eight steps to guide you through this process.

1. Identify business prospects.
  - Identify a prospective company through networking, referrals, the Internet, LinkedIn (Profile and Groups), top-50 Dallas companies list, Regional Chambers, local news, querying where consumers previously interviewed, etc.
  - Target companies that look like other successful business partner relationships you currently have.
  - Target companies that might be doing business with another community organization or HHS Agency.
  - Target companies where you may have met an employee through a networking function or during travel.
2. Find a contact.
  - Identify a contact.

- Get the contact's name, number, title, name of manager, etc. Get information on the contact and on the company from:
  - websites,
  - LinkedIn,
  - annual reports,
  - professional associations, and
  - receptionists.

### 3. Do your research.

- Check out news and magazine articles, websites, business journals, and press releases that involve your prospect and/or contact.
- Email the contact and attach the appropriate VR Brochure, showing that you know something about the prospect's industry and business, and how you could contribute to their business goals. Always include your contact information in your email signature.
- The purpose is to get your name (and VR) out there, and to position you as a source of industry knowledge.

4. Follow up.

- You stated in your letter that you would call on a certain day, so do it!
- This will give you basis for saying: “I am Jane Doe from the State of Texas VR Services, and I promised <contact name> that I would call this morning.”
- Call and leave messages until you reach the decision maker.

5. Meet with the decision maker.

- Remember that you are trying to get an appointment with a decision maker.
- When you make contact, say: “Hello, <decision maker’s name>. I sent you an email and attached documents on VR Business Services. Have you had time to review them? The purpose of my email and this call is to address the consulting and staffing services the State can provide to your company at no expense. When is a convenient time for us to get together for a 20-minute non-decision-making meeting? Would Wednesday or Thursday work for you? How about 8:30 or 4:30?”
- Schedule a face-to-face meeting. (A telephone meeting is not effective, and will not cultivate a new Partner).

6. Confirm the appointment.

- Send an email or a calendar invite. (A written confirmation helps make a positive impression before the first meeting.)

7. Engage the customer.

- Initially, describe your agenda: “My first job is to determine your business needs as it relates to diversity and inclusion. And further, to advise you on the staffing and consulting services that I can provide in the areas of employee retention, accessibility, technology availability, as well as to create awareness and education on job seekers with disabilities.”
  - Then, show your list of other businesses that partner with VR and say: “There is no obligation on your part to partner with our organization, however, many businesses within Texas have found benefits in doing so, such as company A and company B.”
  - Elaborate by saying: “Businesses partner with VR for access to a non-traditional talent pool, to enhance their diversity and inclusion initiatives, and to get the employees with a disability back to work.”

- Close with: “Our business partners chose us because VR is the most comprehensive resource on solving disability-related employment issues in the State of Texas.”
- Gather customer needs in:
  - accessibility consulting,
  - staffing, and
  - disability awareness.
- Offer website accessibility consulting, which includes an understanding of the organizational interfaces and names, and propose to consult with the company in fulfilling identified needs.
- Propose next steps for each engagement and identify accessibility consulting, staffing, and disability awareness training points-of-contact.
- Attempt to get some of the reporting structure (company’s organization chart).

8. End with the customer buy-in.

- Confirm the services the customer wants to receive from VR (there may be some services that the customer may not be comfortable with at first).
- Document only the services that the customer wants to receive in this engagement.
- Follow up on agreed changes to the engagement(s) in writing.
- Email a thank you note for the meeting containing recapped next steps.



## Understanding Business Needs

Understanding the employer's needs requires listening. Make sure to give the employer time to share what is important to them. The guide below may help you practice effective listening.

### Practicing Listening Skills

Listening is an art, a skill, and a discipline. Like other skills, it requires self-control. You must understand what is involved in listening and develop the necessary techniques to be silent and listen. You must ignore your own needs and focus your attention on the person speaking. Hearing becomes listening only when you pay attention to what is said and follow it very closely.

Demonstrate you are listening by:

- using words that convey attentiveness,
- making eye contact,
- keeping a relaxed and focused posture,
- mirroring words to give affirmation,
- nodding your head, and
- leaning toward the speaker.

Listen to:

- Show your support and help the other person(s) relax.
- Convey acceptance allowing each person to speak and be heard.
- Be able to ask questions for clarification.
- Check assumptions.
- Clear up misperceptions.
- Restate or paraphrase.
- Find the key points or issues.
- Provide the silence necessary to encourage brainstorming and discussion.
- Know when to bring to closure and when to test for agreements.

You need to show that you are listening carefully. This is called “attending.” Attending skills build rapport and help people feel at ease.

- Listen without interrupting.
- Pay attention.
- Use supportive body language.

- Paraphrase facts and feelings.

You also need to practice reacting and responding in positive ways. Using good response skills helps people understand the things you care about. It also helps you collect information about the situation.

- Ask clarifying questions.
- Ask probing questions.
- Restate what the other person is saying, catching the essence but trying to take out the volatile phrases or language. This is called “laundering” language and it can reduce friction.
- Summarize facts and feelings.
- Reframe issues. Focus on the interests, not positions.
- Try to always use “I” language instead of “you” language. For example, don't say, “When you do that, you make me feel . . .” Instead say, “When you do that, I feel . . .”
- Try to communicate directly with the other person.
- Be forward thinking. Try to focus on the future.

Brainstorm to find as many options or solutions as possible. The ground rules to brainstorming are that the people in the meeting are just throwing out ideas. At this point in the process, do not eliminate any ideas. The other ground rule is that mere mention of an idea does

not mean that either person is agreeing to that idea. It's just an idea thrown out for purposes of the brainstorming session. Brainstorming helps turn good ideas into a plan of action. Look for points of agreement that people have in common and mention them.

You listen by paying attention.

Paying attention and listening without interruption allows the other person to "let off steam." Before any serious resolutions can occur, you need to let the other person know that you understand where they are coming from, and that you understand they feel strongly about the issues you are discussing with them. Their intense emotions must be acknowledged and affirmed before serious solutions can be discussed. You should encourage the other person to let off steam and explain their concerns by using verbal cues such as:

- "I see."
- "I understand."
- "That's a good point."
- "I can see that you feel strongly about that."
- "I can understand how you could see it like that."

Nonverbal actions also show the other person that you hear what they are saying:

- Squarely face the other person.
- Adopt an open posture.
- Lean discreetly, not threateningly, toward the other person.
- Maintain eye contact. Take cues from the other person as to the extent of eye contact with which he or she is comfortable.
- Try to relax as you interact with the other person.

Of course, for the other person to know that you are listening, you must make a response. The effectiveness of your listening will be determined by the style and quality of your response.

For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

## Questions to Ask Employers

- Do you have a vision and mission statement that you can share with me?
- How would you describe the philosophy or the culture of your business?
- Do you have job descriptions available for your workforce? If so, may we review them?
- What are the key qualities you look for in your employees?
- What are your high turnover positions? What positions are toughest to fill?
- What skills are most important for applicants to be considered for hire?
- Do you offer in-service training for all or some positions?
- Describe your typical work schedules and locations. (Consider factors such as flex time, shift work, telework, and travel requirements.)
- Do you have a dress code for certain (or all) positions?
- What is your policy with regards to applicants with felony or misdemeanor convictions? (What things would disqualify an applicant?)

- Is there anything else about your business that we should know when considering qualified applicants that we may refer?

Remember the benefits we offer:

1. Pre-screened, qualified applicants: We will work with you to develop an efficient applicant prescreening process that will provide you with a qualified applicant for the available position.
2. Personalized contact: We continue personalized contact throughout the process, ensuring that your needs are met in all areas regarding working with individuals with disabilities.
3. Jobsite assessments: We will work with you by providing a jobsite assessment which will help to identify positions that are accessible and offer solutions for those that can be.
4. Job analysis: We can provide a job analysis as requested, to break the position down into individual tasks. This will insure that each task can be performed by a person with a disability, and will help identify the essential functions of a position.
5. Accommodation assistance: We can work with you to identify the proper accommodations are in place for an individual with a disability to ensure the employee has the proper tools to be as productive as any other employee.

6. Diversity presentations for employees on how to assist customers with disabilities: We can provide diversity presentations to employees on how to work with both employees and customers who have disabilities.
7. On-site training: We can provide different types of training for employees with disabilities which may include training in using the assistive technology they already know with the business software, a job coach or other types of training as defined by you.
8. Assistance with retaining employees who develop a disability: We work with you to ensure that employees who may develop a disability while on the job can be retained as valued members of your workforce. This can reduce training costs associated with hiring a new employee, and help increase that employees' production after accommodations have been made.
9. Follow-up services: VR continues to work with you after services of any type have been provided to ensure that your needs are being met, and to help address future needs as they may arise.
10. Business consultation, which helps to:
  - Organize and increase performance.
  - Gain advice and recommendations.
  - Improve in areas where there may be problems occurring.



- Implement assistive technology.
- Assist the employee to perform work tasks.
- Assist with helping employees to determine and utilize their transferable skills.
- Provide specialized advice in the area regarding the hiring of people with disabilities.
- Assist with information regarding tax incentives such as forms and resources.

## Activity 6: Employer Contact Role Play

Directions: Break up into groups of three. Take turns being a business representative, a VR professional, and an observer. Practice making an employer contact to cultivate a relationship, learn about the employer's needs, and offer a variety of VR services that will support the local business. Everyone will play each of these roles and you will have 15 minutes to complete the role play. During the last five minutes, the observer will watch and provide input on the following:

1. Was the introduction smooth?
2. Were the services and benefits explained?
3. Was the employer given time to share what their needs are?
4. Did the VR professional summarize and establish a follow-up?
5. Was the employer engaged?
6. Was what we have to offer clear to the employer?

## Wrap-Up

This was an initial practice on making an employer contact. Remember the tips and steps above and make a difference for our job seekers with disabilities. We encourage you to go out into your community and master this skill. In the long run, gaining confidence and competence in cultivating employer relationships will pay off.

## Rate Yourself

As you move forward in your job, rate yourself to see how well you are doing in the following activities.

Read the actions below and rate yourself using the following scale:

1 = no experience

2 = fair and limited experience

3 = some experience

4 = good experience

5 = excellent cultivation of employer relations

\_\_ marketing vocational rehabilitation services to employers

\_\_ meeting employers and cultivating a relationship

\_\_ cold calling local business to identify a contact

\_\_ supporting a local business with accessibility consultation

- \_ linking a job seeker with a disability with local internship opportunities
  
- \_ creating a job match between a job seeker with a disability with local business needs
  
- \_ making a spontaneous employer contact
  
- \_ participating in local job fair
  
- \_ being invited to present to local business on disability related issues
  
- \_ breaking down misconceptions about hiring job seekers with disabilities
  
- \_ increasing awareness of accessibility and the benefits for everyone
  
- \_ breaking into new occupational areas and opening doors for job seekers with disabilities
  
- \_ attending community business meetings
  
- \_ participating in cross-program functions
  
- \_ learning about assistive technology and offering demonstrations
  
- \_ using social media to network

## References

### **Career One Stop:**

<https://www.careeronestop.org/ResourcesFor/WorkersWithDisabilities/job-accommodations.aspx>

### **Department of Labor:**

<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/disability/jobaccommodations>

### **DO.IT Disabilities Opportunity Internetworking and Technology:**

<http://www.washington.edu/doi/>

### **Job Accommodation Network:** <https://askjan.org/>

### **Understood (for learning and attention issues):**

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies>